

January 31, 2003

## **ATTORNEY GENERAL JOINS NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO SPONSOR FIFTH ANNUAL NATIONAL CONSUMER PROTECTION WEEK**

BISMARCK – Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem has joined a group of federal, state and local organizations and national advocacy groups to launch the fifth annual National Consumer Protection Week, February 2-8, 2003, to highlight consumer protection and education efforts.

This year's theme, *"Information Security: Putting the Pieces Together,"* focuses on practical steps consumers can take to manage their personal and sensitive information wisely and help minimize its misuse. "Online safety is the responsibility of everyone who uses a computer, regardless of their age or occupation," said Stenehjem. "I encourage everyone to take a look at the security of their personal information, online or off."

The good news is that securing a computer is largely a matter of routine maintenance. For consumers or business people, strong passwords, up-to-date anti-virus software, and firewalls can go a long way toward protecting computers, and personal or business information from those who would try to damage a network operation, or worse yet, steal personal information to commit a crime.

By taking a few simple precautions, consumers can protect their personal information while surfing the web:

- Use anti-virus software, and keep it up to date. Every month new viruses infect thousands of computers. Anti-virus software scans incoming communications and looks for troublesome files.
- Never open e-mail attachments that are unexpected or from unknown senders. Opening the attachment could let loose a virus.
- Use strong passwords. Use at least 8 characters and a mix of letters and symbols. Don't use personal information or a log-in name.
- Back up important files onto a removable disc and store them in a safe place.

"I am proud to participate in sharing the message of this year's National Consumer Protection Week campaign," said Stenehjem. "We will continue to focus on Internet safety issues throughout this month in our weekly consumer protection newsletter 'Too Good To Be True.'"

For more information about NCPW, visit the NCPW website at [www.consumer.gov](http://www.consumer.gov).

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